



Safety Topic of the Month: Sleep, Stress, Sickness and Strength.

Richmond Refinery

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Understanding Sleep, Stress, Sickness, and Strength as safety factors.



During our 1st quarter turnarounds, many of us will be working longer hours, have fewer days to recuperate over the weekend, and will be either asked - or required - to work nights or unusual shifts.

This Safety Topic of the Month is intended to inform employees and contractors of safety hazards associated with sleep deprivation, uncontrolled stress, and exposure to illness - as well as providing ways to reduce stress and be at your best during this busy time.



Sleep Deprivation

Lack of sleep is more than a personal issue. It's also a matter of workplace safety. Fatigue has been identified as a factor in many accidents involving motor vehicles, machinery, and chemical processes.

Sleep needs vary, but most adults need around eight hours a night or per sleep cycle. If you think you can get by all right with considerably less, you might just be kidding yourself.

- Can you wake up on time without an alarm?
- Do you feel rested?

If not, you may be shortchanging yourself on needed sleep.

If you work at night or your shifts change – you may have trouble getting enough sleep.



Strategies for getting more sleep

- If you're on a regular shift, go to bed and get up at about the same time.
- Arrange your bedroom so it is quiet, dark, and at a comfortably cool temperature.
- Avoid caffeine (found in coffee, tea, cola and chocolate) before you go to sleep.
- Don't rely on [sleeping pills](#), [alcohol](#) or other drugs to sleep and wake up.
 - These substances quickly backfire and cause [sleeplessness](#) and other problems.
- Get regular exercise to help you sleep and to keep you fit to fight fatigue.



More strategies for getting more sleep

Most of us have many responsibilities and interests outside of work - caring for a home, children and parents, and countless other activities. Getting enough rest before work has to be a priority – for your safety & the safety of your co-workers.

Enlist the help of your family in making time for enough sleep.

- Find ways to be more efficient about necessary tasks.
Learn to say "no" to some activities.

Explain to your family that you're in a busy period at work, "I'm sorry, I won't be cleaning the garage this weekend. I have to prioritize my time, and sleep is more critical right now with the busy schedule at work. I will make the garage (or other project, etc.) a priority when the turnaround is complete".



Stress

Stress occurs when we are faced with situations that cause nervousness or even excitement. These situations can range from increased production demands at work to heavy traffic during your commute. Stress isn't necessarily a bad thing, either. Most of us work better under some pressure, and we learn better too.

Physical symptoms of excessive stress can include headaches, digestive upsets, muscle tension, sweating, shaking, heart irregularities, fatigue and other discomforts.

Certain behaviors may also be symptoms of too much stress - excessive eating, drinking, smoking or drug use. Recklessness may also be a sign of stress.

Since stress can't be avoided, it is important to know how to manage it to maintain health and safety.



Lower stress

- Manage your time better to avoid last-minute deadline pressures or work overload.
- Tackle first things first. Complete your work in order of priority - do the most important task first and save the least important for last.
- Focus on solutions rather than problems. Don't just complaining about what's wrong, try to find ways to fix it.
- Eat regular balanced meals. Take it easy on sugar, as well as alcohol and other drugs.
- Maintain your sense of humor. Today's crisis often becomes tomorrow's funny story - so why not laugh about it today?



Reduce Stress with Exercise:

Exercise can lower blood pressure, circulate oxygenated blood, and allow you to gain a sense of accomplishment for taking care of yourself. Try not to be frustrated if you're not able to complete your regular routine - integrate new activities into your days or nights:

- If you have a desk job, wear a pedometer and try for 10,000 steps per shift.
- Try to do between 10 and 25 push ups (or desk push ups) every hour.
- Get out of your seat every 20 minutes for your favorite stretches – shoulder scribes, wall crawler, and happy buddah!

Meals and snacks that provide steady energy and are filled with nutrients!



Soups: Chicken noodle, tomato, minestrone, etc!

Fresh vegetables: Carrots, celery, cauliflower with low calorie dips or peanut butter.

Fresh fruits: Bananas, oranges, blueberries...

Drinks: Water, green or herbal tea with honey and lemon.

Salads at home or from the cafeteria: Salad greens with kidney beans, chicken breast, salmon or beef steak and dressing.

Sandwiches with whole grain breads, cheese and sprouts!

Protein powder smoothies prepared with water, flax meal, strawberries and bananas.

Cottage cheese or yogurt with peaches or strawberries and almonds.

Are you unsure about your portion size? Try serving yourself a smaller portion than usual and have more if you're still hungry. If you do indulge in junk food, read the label and have only one serving.



Avoiding sickness with hand washing

Wash your hands after going to the bathroom, sneezing, handling money, shaking hands, touching handrails or a surface that was recently handled by another person who was sick (computer keyboards, shopping carts, telephones). If no washbasin is available, please use hand sanitizer.

- Rub soap over all areas of your hands, both front and back, for at least 15 seconds and use lots of warm water to wash and rinse.
- Use a towel to open the washroom's door when leaving.
- Always wash your hands before eating.
- Use a fork, if possible, when eating finger food at crew "dinners".
- Cough or sneeze into a tissue or your sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with your fingers.

Being your best includes a good attitude towards safety.



- FOCUS. A good safety attitude means you focus on the task. How well are you concentrating on the job? If you have other things on your mind, you may be distracted. And if you are bored, an accidental slip is easy.
- TIME. A good safety attitude means taking the time to do the job correctly and using the right Personal Protective Equipment.
- RESPONSIBILITY. If you care about yourself and your co-workers, you will take responsibility even when a task "isn't my job".

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- RISK. We are all at risk. But, you can weigh the risks of performing a job a certain way. A good safety attitude means being smart and avoid taking unnecessary risks.
- STRENGTH. No, this doesn't mean muscle strength. What it means is the strength to do the right thing, even when you are under pressure to take shortcuts. A good safety attitude means you have the strength to stick with the procedures – even if that means you are the one to stop unsafe work.